THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF NORTHERN INDIANA

DIOCESAN ORDINATION PROCESS
FOR
THE SACRED ORDER OF DEACONS

Revised, January 2017

> As a deacon in the Church, you are to study the Holy Scriptures, to seek nourishment from them, and to model your life upon them. You are to make Christ and his redemptive love known, by your word and example, to those among whom you live, and work, and worship. You are to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. You are to assist the bishop and priests in public worship abd in the ministration of God's Word and Sacraments, and you are to carry out other duties assigned to you from time to time. At all times, your life and teaching are to show Christ's people that in serving the helpless they are serving Christ himself.
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> *Book of Common Prayer*, page 543

These words from "The Examination" in the rite for the ordination of deacons are probably already familiar to you from your conversations with your priest, and your prayers and reflection on the possibility of serving as a deacon of the Church. These words are a good summary of the life and work of a deacon, along with the promises or vows following in "The Examination." Pray them often in your heart as you enter into discernment and formation for diaconal life and work. Consider these things well and deeply throughout the periods of discovery and discernment, and postulancy and candidacy during formation. Discuss them often with your priest and other advisors.

Always remember the reason for seeking this vocation. It is stated in the final promise or vow of "The Examination." The Bishop asks, "Will you in all things seek not your glory but the glory of the Lord Christ?"

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This booklet contains an overview of the process for ordination to the Sacred Order of Priests as it is engaged in the Episcopal Diocese of Northern Indiana. Included with this document is a narrative of the discovery and discernment period, a checklist of tasks to accomplish, a brief description of the purpose of the Parish Discernment Group, and an outline of suggested topics to be covered during the series of meetings of the Parish Discernment Group.

There are numerous people around to assist and support you in this process. Your priest and Vestry, your family and friends in the parish and beyond, the Commission on Ministry and the Standing Committee of the Diocese all stand ready to encourage and support you in your inquiry, discernment, formation, and, God willing, ordination.

The Missioner for Formation is the Rev'd Canon Henry G Randolph Jr. He is willing and glad to assist you and the others involved in this process with you whenever help is needed. He can be reached in several ways noted below:

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Diaconate (III.6)

Discovery

Meet with your priest to discuss the possibility that God may be calling you to serve in the diaconate. This will require several meetings.

With your priest's permission, set up an appointment with the bishop. If you are married, your spouse should accompany you to this meeting.

At the bishop's recommendation, contact the chair of the Commission on Ministry (CoM) to make an appointment to meet with the CoM. If you are married, your spouse should accompany you to this meeting. The Commission will make a recommendation to the Bishop about your desire to enter a formal period of discernment.

Discernment

This is a very important time of prayer and listening in which one seeks more deeply to understand the nature of the Lord's call.

When you enter formal discernment, the Commission will assign a mentor to you. The mentor will assist you in the ordination process, and, when possible, attend the meetings of your Parish Discernment Group (PDG), providing reports to the CoM about your progress.

During formal discernment, you will meet with your priest and other members of your PDG, to discuss the nature and scope of lay and ordained ministry. The amount of time needed for this period of discernment varies.

During the discernment period, the following things must be accomplished: (1) a thorough background check; (2) a medical evaluation; (3) a psychological evaluation; (4) complete and return the Information Form; (5) sign and return the Release Form; and (6) have transcripts of all undergraduate and graduate work sent to the Diocesan Office.

With the advice of your priest, discernment group, and Vestry, you may decide to continue in the journey leading to ordination to the diaconate, the next step of which is nomination for postulancy. At the conclusion of the discernment period, you will meet with the bishop again, prior to being invited for a postulancy interview with the CoM. The CoM will make a recommendation to the bishop about admitting you to postulancy for the diaconate.

Nomination

You may be nominated to the bishop as a postulant for ordination to the diaconate. This nomination, in writing, is made by your priest and Vestry, using the required canonical form. The documentation for nomination must include a description and report about the discernment process.

After nomination and the CoM interview, the bishop may admit you as a Postulant.

Postulancy & Candidacy

During this period, the postulant begins studies in the Northern Indiana School of Theology (NI SoT) and attends the meetings of the Formation Group.

Postulants for the diaconate shall be prepared, and demonstrate basic competence, in five general areas of learning:

(1) The Holy Scriptures, theology, and the tradition of the Church
(2) The history and theology of the Diaconate
(3) Human awareness and understanding
(4) Spiritual development and discipline
(5) Practical training and experience

During formation, postulants must undergo sexual misconduct prevention training, training regarding Title IV of the Canons, and anti-racism training.

Each postulant must participate in the Formation Group meetings. Postulants must communicate with the bishop, in person or by letter, four times a year in the Ember Weeks, reflecting on the experience of academic, diaconal, human, spiritual, and practical development.

After about two years of study in NI SoT, the bishop may admit a postulant as a candidate for ordination to the diaconate. During candidacy, formation in preparation for ordination to the diaconate continues.

The bishop, in consultation with the Commission on Ministry, shall determine the length of time and extent of formation needed to prepare each candidate for ordination.

From time to time during candidacy, each candidate's progress shall be evaluated in writing by the Commission on Ministry. Successful completion of the program of formation and preparation by each candidate shall be certified to the CoM and the bishop. The CoM shall prepare a final written assessment of each candidate's readiness for ordination to the diaconate.

The evaluations, assessment, and recommendation of the CoM shall be made available to the Standing Committee. If the medical and psychological examinations, and the background check are more than three (3) years old, they must be updated before the candidate makes application for ordination to the diaconate.

A candidate must be at least twenty-four (24) years of age before ordination to the diaconate. Upon certification in writing by the Standing Committee that all canonical requirements have been met, and that there is no sufficient objection on medical, psychological, moral, doctrinal, or spiritual grounds, and with the recommendation of the Standing Committee, the bishop may ordain the candidate a deacon.

A Checklist for the Diaconate Ordination Process

Discernment & Nomination

____ Meetings with your priest to discuss vocation to the Diaconate.
____ Meeting with Bishop to discuss entering the discernment phase. Date: _____
____ Meeting with Commission on Ministry for Discernment Interview. Date: _____
____ Meetings with Parish Discernment Group.
    ____ Have transcripts of all undergraduate and graduate work sent to the Bishop's Office.
    ____ Complete Information Form, with spiritual autobiography, Release Form, and send to the Bishop's Office.
    ____ Request the Bishop's Office to initiate background check.
    ____ Medical check-up/evaluation with your physician. Date: _____
        Get the required form from the Bishop's Office
    ____ Psychological evaluation. Date: _____
        Arrange this through the Bishop's Office
____ Nomination for Postulancy by Vestry. Date: _____
____ Send acceptance of nomination to the Diocesan Office. Date: _____
____ Interview with Bishop. Date: _____
____ Postulancy interview with the Commission on Ministry. Date: _____

Postulancy

Date of Admission: _____

____ Meet with the Bishop to discuss formation and training. Date: _____
____ Commence participation in Formation Group meetings and NI SoT.
____ Communicate with the Bishop at the four Embertides each year.
____ Endorsement for Candidacy from Vestry. Date: _____

Candidacy

Date of Admission: _____

____ Update background check, medical evaluation, and psychological evaluation when these are more than three years old.
____ Meet with the Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee from time to time.
____ Certification of required training in abuse prevention, anti-racism, and Title IV.
____ Certificate of endorsement for ordination from Vestry. Date: _____
____ Apply to the Bishop for ordination to the Diaconate. Date: _____
____ Ordination to the Diaconate. Date: _____

The Parish Discernment Group

Discerning God's call to ordained ministry includes the prayerful reflection of several persons within the community of faith including the nominee, priest, bishop, members of the Commission on Ministry (CoM), and the Parish Discernment Group (PDG). In our Diocese this discernment process is normally six to twelve months.

During this time the applicant will meet with the PDG on a regular basis, complete the Information Form and spiritual autobiography, request that transcripts be sent to the diocesan office, complete canonical forms, have physical and psychological evaluations, and submit to a background check.

Members of the Parish Discernment Group

The task of the PDG is to offer encouragement, counsel and raise issues and themes of ministry for discussion with the nominee. By our baptism, all of us have been called to a life of holiness and ministry. It is the task of the nominee, through discussions and evaluations, to continue to discern during these months whether the call is specifically to ordained ministry.

If, after the time of discernment, the nominee is admitted as a postulant, the PDG may remain in contact through occasional meetings throughout the process leading to ordination. If the decision is that the nominee should not be admitted to postulancy, know that no one has failed. God will indeed be working his purposes out, and the time of discernment will bear its own fruits in the nominee's life.

Thank you for your willingness to be a part of the PDG. Your commitment means that you will be walking beside the nominee during a significant time in that person's spiritual journey.

Procedure

The PDG should meet with the nominee on a regular basis (6 – 12 times). It is appropriate that the priest should participate in some of these meetings. If the nominee is married, the spouse of the nominee will participate in some of the meetings.

A list of topics along with prayers and scripture lessons follows to aid in your discussion. It is hoped that the gatherings will gradually become a community of sharing benefitting both the nominee and the members of the PDG. It is important that confidentiality be kept within the group.

One member of the PDG should chair each meeting. This person will begin and end with prayer, introduce the theme for discussion, keep it "on track" and see that meetings begin and conclude on time.

Notes should be kept during each meeting to help the PDG prepare its recommendation to the Vestry. This document will also be made available to the CoM and the bishop.

Any concerns about the process or the nominee should be addressed as they occur to the Missioner for Formation, Chairman of the Commission on Ministry, or the Bishop.

SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR PARISH DISCERNMENT GROUPS *

Topic 1: Telling Your Story

Opening Collect (O.C.) #58 For Guidance. BCP, p. 832
Closing Prayer (C.P.) #61 A Prayer of Self-Dedication, p. 832
Scripture: Matthew 13:44-45
Discussion: *How have you experienced the Holy in your life? What has been your experience of the Church? How have you perceived God's call to you?*

Topic 2: Ordained Ministry

O.C. For the Ministry II, BCP, p. 256
C.P. Litany for Ordinations, p. 548
Scripture: John 6:35-40; 6:65-69; 10:11-18; 21:15-19
See also Catechism, p. 856; The Examination from the Ordinal – Priest, p. 531, Deacon, p. 543
Discussion: *What is ordained ministry? What are your gifts for ordained ministry?*

Topic 3: Lay Ministry

O.C. Prayer for Baptism, BCP, p. 418
C.P. A Song of Creation, p. 88
Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-16; John 15:1-17, See also Catechism, p. 855
Discussion: *How does lay ministry differ from ordained ministry? In what ministries have you been involved? How has ministry affected your life?*

Topic 4: Prayer Life

O.C. Proper 22, BCP, p. 234
C.P. Collect # 8, BCP, p. 395
Scripture: Romans 8:24-28; Colossians 1:9-23; See also Catechism, p. 856
Discussion: *What is your experience of personal and public prayer? How is prayer a part of your daily life? What does it mean to pray?*

Topic 5: Worship Life

O.C. For the Unity of the Church, BCP, p. 255
C.P. #10 For the Diocese, p. 817
Scripture: I Corinthians 11:23-26; Psalms 122, 84
Discussion: *How have you experienced public worship? What is your experience of worship? What is the most important part of worship for you?*

Topic 6: Spiritual Gifts

O.C. #2 Of the Holy Spirit, BCP, p. 200
C.P. Day of Pentecost #2, p. 175
Scripture: I Corinthians 12:1-11; See also Catechism, p. 852
Discussion: *What are your spiritual gifts? How is the Holy Spirit active in your ministry?*

Topic 7: Service

O.C. #22 For Social Service, BCP, p. 260
C.P. #62 Prayer of St. Francis, p. 833
Scripture: Matthew 25:31-35; Mark 9:33-37
Discussion: *What does it mean to serve God? How have you served God?*

Topic 8: Study/Reading

O.C. #23 For Education, BCP, p. 261
C.P. Proper 28, p. 236
Scripture: Matthew 13:47-52
Discussion: *What are your study habits? What have you been reading lately? How do you get your information? What is your experience of Scripture study?*

Topic 9: Family and Relationships

O.C. #54 For Those We Love, BCP, p. 831. C.P. #45 For Families, p. 831
Scripture: I Thessalonians 1
Discussion: *What does your family think about your call to ministry?*
What are the potential costs of ordained ministry for your family and friends?

Topic 10: Mission / Outreach

O.C. Collect for Mission II, BCP, p. 100
C.P. Collect for Mission III, p. 101
Scripture: Matthew 28:16-20; See also Catechism, Mission of the Church, p. 855
Discussion: *What is your experience of mission and ministry outside the parish? How are you called to evangelize? How important is evangelism?*

Topic 11: Endings and Beginnings

O.C. Epiphany VIII, BCP, p. 216
C.P. Litany of Thanksgiving II, p. 836
Scripture: Matthew 13:31-33; 16:21-28
Discussion: *How has this group been helpful to you? What have you learned about others and yourself? How will discernment continue to be a part of your life?*

Topic 12: Preparing the Recommendation (*PDG Members Only*)

O.C. #58 For Guidance. BCP, p. 832
C.P. For the Ministry III. BCP, p. 256
Scripture: Ephesians 4:11-16; Ephesians 3:20-21
Using the notes and other forms, prepare the PDG recommendation for the Vestry. Suitable periods of silent prayer may be helpful.

* At all meetings of the PDG the Our Father is offered after the opening prayer.

Contact Persons

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Title III

Title III of the Canons governs the ordination process for the Diaconate and the Priesthood of the Episcopal Church. The applicable canons that effect your journey to ordination are reproduced on the following pages. It is recommended that you read through these canons and refer to them during the ordination process. It is recommended also that you have a copy of the latest edition of Constitution and Canons. Check with your priest about how to order a copy, or order directly from www.churchpublishing.org.